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TO THE PUBLIC.

FELLOW-CITIZENS.

OF all the extraordinary performances I ever beheld, the late hand-bill, signed by eight members of our house of representatives, is the most extraordinary—and I doubt not that it will be considered by the country at large as the legitimate offspring of the subscribers; being replete with that unauthorized assumption of power, and those round assertions so truly characteristic—propagated for the avowed purpose of 'undeceiving the people' in a matter of the first moment, and yet not containing one authenticated fact for them to found an opinion on—but resting all upon their mere *disclaim*, penetrating into future events, and proclaiming what *shall be* the decisions of legislators not yet elected—I trust however without trespassing too much on your time I shall be able to prove to your satisfaction that it is an attempt as insidious as it is unfounded, and calculated in a particular manner to mislead the minds of our fellow citizens, and preclude an honest investigation.

The true mode of conveying information to the community at large, or of doing away any improper impressions which may have been made on the public mind, is by a fair statement of facts and necessary and rational deductions therefrom; but the signers of that hand bill pursue a different mode; they substitute personal invectives for facts, and bold assertions for argument—they begin by a violent attack upon 'The Friend of the People,' charging him with 'nefarious and factious designs,' in attempting to deceive them. This is a serious accusation; and if I understand the expression right, it means an attempt originating from a turbulent and wicked motive to effect measures repugnant to the general welfare and happiness of the people. From what part of that publication they could draw such conclusions, I am at a loss to discover; but I think, upon a more minute examination, it will be found a very appropriate expression when applied to the hand-bill. Through the medium of this, the public are informed 'that the estimate therein contained is just, and that it will not be exceeded in any one year.' I would, in the first place, ask from whence those men derive their authority for this declaration?—All appropriations of money must be by law—and in making laws the governor and council each have an equal voice with the house of representatives. Is it not then a deception practised upon the people for those men to assure them, that this estimate shall not be exceeded, when they are not, even in the first instance, vested with the power to fix it? They may, as far as respects themselves, make a second bold stroke at popularity, and say, they will serve the public for nothing; but then the period for which they are elected is of

short duration; and we could not again hope to find so patriotic a set. No subsequent legislature is bound by what they do; but may alter, repeal and amend as they think fit—and it must be from the spirit of prophecy that they are enabled to foretell what sums a future legislature shall think a sufficient compensation for their services. But the estimate itself is worthy of attention on many accounts. First, as to the amount of compensation—The compensation allowed the council, members and officers is pitiful in the extreme; even a common mechanic cannot be procured for that sum and find himself; the fact is, it is lower by one third than any of the states pay their representatives, at the same time that every expense is higher here by 75 or 100 per cent. Now is it reasonable to suppose that the governor and council, even if this should be proposed by the house, would give it their sanction, knowing that a future legislature would certainly alter it; and it would be deceiving the people for the moment; for so soon as the yoke was fixed upon them, even the representatives would be for allowing adequate compensation.

But, my fellow-citizens, the principle involves another consequence of great importance—it is introducing a species of aristocracy the most dangerous of any in society; for if the compensation allowed the council, members and other officers be so low as barely to maintain them, or perhaps not even that, the result will be, the rich nabobs alone will fill our councils, and the man of merit, but moderate fortune, however esteemed for his integrity and information and possessing the united suffrage of his fellow-citizens, will be excluded. In their estimate the speakers are put upon the same footing with the members; in all other deliberative bodies even up to the congress of the United States the speaker is allowed double; and I can see no reason to suppose our territorial government will effect a singularity in that point.

The estimate further states, that the legislature will not sit more than two months at most in a year. They must indeed possess superior if not supernatural skill in jurisprudence to form a complete code of laws and such as will meet all the exigencies of the country in two months, when the different state legislatures in states that have complete codes of statute laws formed, frequently sit from three to four months in the year; and almost all the states in the union have also adopted the British statutes up to a particular period, which of themselves form a handsome code. And here where we have only the common law with a very few statutes made and adopted by the governor and judges, for men to pretend that the

legislature can transact the whole business in the course of two months, argues in my opinion a great want of that knowledge in legislating which every member ought to possess—and when we reflect that they have already sat twenty days, to do almost nothing, no surprise would take place, if they should sit the whole year, when business could be found to employ them—When I stated five months as the ground of my calculation I was determined to be within bounds, for I was convinced, that it was far short of what would be necessary to do the business that was absolutely requisite—They conclude their statement by saying that 'the treasurer, auditor and member to congress are no additional expense'—It is not denied that those officers are necessary and that they must be paid; yet they point out no mode for effecting it, nor do they give any reason why they are no additional expense—as to the treasurer and auditor they are invariably an expense to the government, though the member in congress for the N. W. Territory is at present paid by congress, yet that is not a matter of right, but a law was passed for the special purpose upon a representation and petition from the territory stating their inability—But with what countenance can we ask congress to pay our member, when it has been stated to them, that we export yearly in one article to the amount of 750,000 dollars—a great deal more than many of the states do, who have to pay their equal quota to the support of the general government—and if we had the assurance to ask it, I fancy they would have the confidence to refuse us—If a candid comparison of the statement by 'The Friend of the People' with the one contained in this hand-bill is made, notwithstanding the 'nefarious and factious designs' with which he is charged, it will be found entitled to as great credit—that corresponds with the usual and accustomed prices, this is unreasonably repugnant to them—that originates from a comparison with a similar government the result of experience, this is the mere speculative ideas of eight men, unauthorized to fix any sum, and apparently not understanding the nature of the business; but, my fellow-citizens, it is happy for us that there is a method of coming at the real truth in this business. The second grade of government is a new thing in this territory, yet it is not so in itself, for the very ordinance which regulates and establishes it has been heretofore acted upon—it was the same that established and regulated the second grade in the N. W. Territory, so that every expense attending it there must of course attend it here, except that they have six or eight members more in the house of representatives; but to balance that, their member in congress

is paid by the general government; and now if we can with any degree of certainty come at the expense that was necessary to support that second grade in the N. W. Territory, we shall then know what it will cost us here—and I am truly happy on this occasion by having it in my power to assure my fellow-citizens, and that not upon vague surmise, but upon the authority of a member of their legislature, that they raised the sum of 25,000 dollars for the support of their government, and that it was found not sufficient—and for the want of specie sufficient to pay the expense of the government, the legislature were reduced to the necessity of issuing a paper currency payable at the treasury in nine months bearing an interest of six per cent—so that instead of deducting 12,180 dollars from the statement by 'The Friend of the People' it will be found so far below what the real exigencies of the government will demand, that we shall, as soon as we get organized, be obliged to make an addition of at least 10,000 dollars—these are facts that cannot be denied, the proof is at hand; they are well known to many persons of information and respectability in our territory.

One thing more I would observe—a very threatening letter has been written to the people, denouncing vengeance on him, if he does not deliver up the author of 'the friend of the people'—this I take to be an attempt to frighten and preclude further investigation, but it will be of little avail when the interests of my fellow-citizens are so deeply concerned. They shall however be gratified upon the following conditions:—if they will prove to the public by authenticated documents and not by assertions:—1st. That the North Western Territory was not established and governed by the same ordinance which establishes and governs us under the second grade. 2d. That the sum of 25,000 dollars was not raised in that territory and found inadequate to meet the exigencies of the government—and 3dly. That the government was not reduced to the extremity of issuing a paper currency bearing an interest of six per cent to meet their expenses. Now if they will only disprove these three things, then the author of 'the friend of the people,' shall not only be at their service; but he will come forward, and in the most public manner, make every acknowledgement and re- cantation that can be demanded. But if they do not, it must of course follow, that, their statement, to say no more of it, is grossly erroneous, and that made by 'the friend of the people,' so far from being exaggerated is 10,000 dollars below, what will be the actual sum necessary to be raised.

Natchez, November 15th, 1809.

THE FRIEND OF THE PEOPLE.